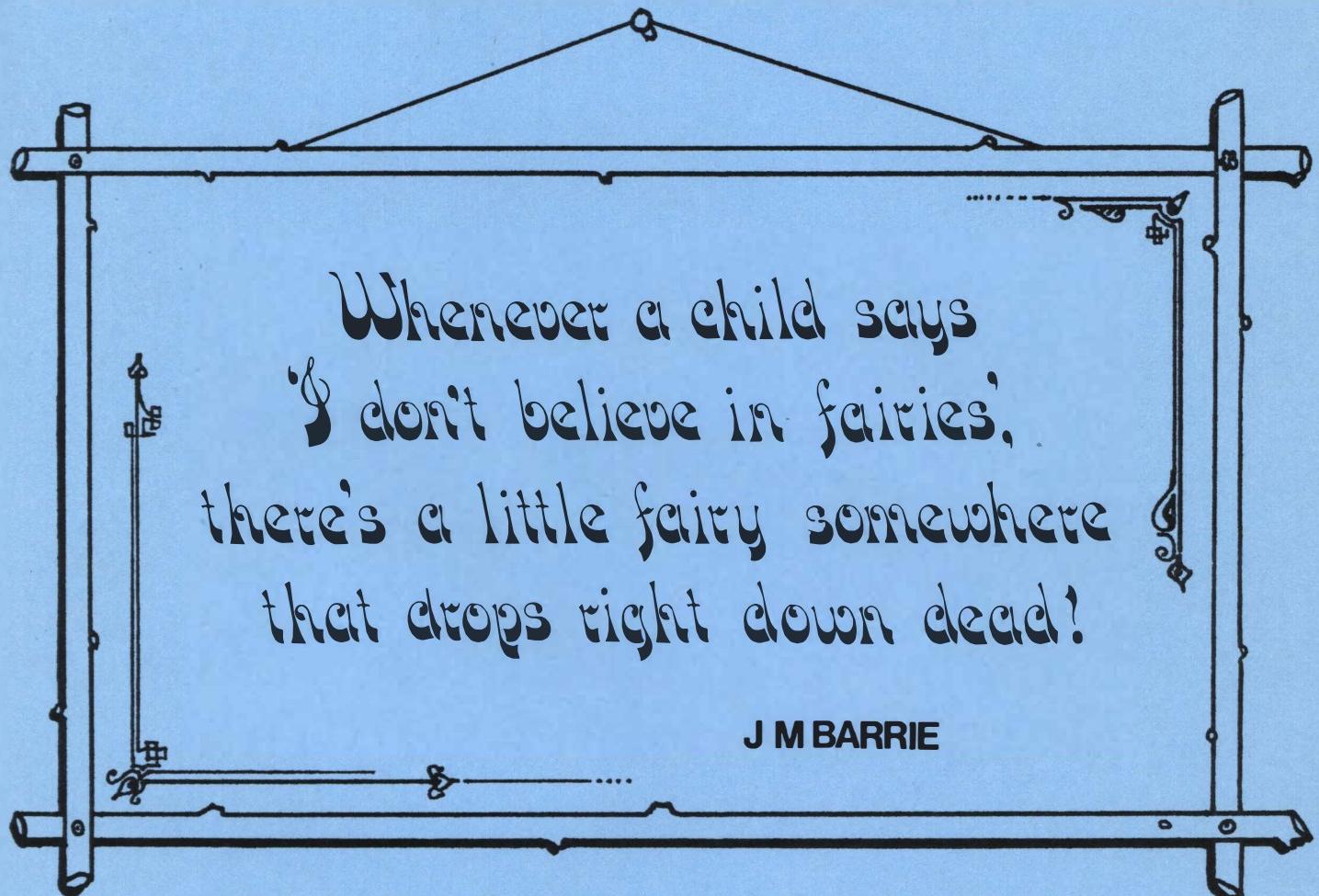


Edited by John Harney and John Rimmer

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EDITORIAL

The State of the Art

Ufology has become a playground for all kinds of cranks and sensation mongers. In addition, many of its more intelligent devotees have taken the apparently irrational nature of its basic data as a licence to indulge in irrational speculations.

Not so our Science Editor. He insists that this subject must be studied in a logical, objective manner, or not at all. In this issue we present his appraisal of the present state of the art.

THE NEW UFOLOGY

— A CRITIQUE

by Alan W. Sharp

Introduction

In a previous article which dealt with certain aspects of the book Operation Trojan Horse (MUFON 4:3, pp 32-35) I pointed out a few of the factual errors and misleading statements which seemed to me to cast doubt on the value of this book as a serious contribution to the understanding of UFO phenomena. Some of my comments were a little pedantic and I am not over-fond of appeals to authority, but these quibbles apart I have no doubt that my criticisms were amply justified.

Nevertheless, since Mr Keel seems to be regarded by some ufologists as a principal spokesman for a particular and forward-looking viewpoint on our subject I feel that I should make at least some attempt to discuss this viewpoint and comment upon its validity.

In doing so I make no claims to special expertise though I consider, in contradistinction to Mr Keel, that it is an advantage to have undergone the rigours of a training in some scientific discipline when it comes to making a sensible assessment of UFO phenomena, despite the fact that many scientists seem to leave their objectivity behind them when they quit their laboratories—the author of Passport to Magonia for example, Jacques Vallee, whom I shall mention extensively, and Prof. M. Agrest who proposed that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by an atomic bomb.

In addressing myself to the task of assessing the import of such works as Operation Trojan Horse and Passport to Magonia I have found it necessary to examine the "new ufology" which they propound from several different points of view and have had some difficulty in presenting my analysis and conclusions in a logical sequence.

The reason for this is not hard to discover and arises from the discursive and confusing approach which their authors have adopted in both of these books and which, allied to an uncritical acceptance by them of even the most ludicrous of stories has made the job of analysis both exhausting and protracted.

It has proved unwise to take anything which they say on trust and this has meant that much time has inevitably been spent in consulting various works of reference and even more has been consumed by the necessity for continual textual rearrangement.

Terminology and Classification

One great difficulty inherent in our work hangs upon the formulation of an adequate definition of the term UFO, for what may be an unidentified phenomenon to one person may not be so to another observer of the same event or to someone who subsequently investigates the matter.

It is noteworthy in this connection that neither Keel nor Vallee defines the term in question and although this failure has its undoubted advantages for them by freeing them from the restraint of rigorous usage its disadvantages for their readership cannot be overemphasised.

In this paper I shall endeavour to adhere to the following definitions:

1. A UFO is anything observed or apparently perceived in the sky which the observer is unable to identify at the time, or anything observed or apparently perceived on the ground or in or on the sea which he considers may have an aerial connotation and which he is unable to identify at the time.
2. A sighting is the actual making of a UFO observation. It is not necessarily directly optical in nature. e.g. radar "sightings" are permissible, though indirect.
3. A UFO report is a record of information concerning a sighting.
4. Ufology is the subject which deals with UFO sightings and reports.
5. UFO reports can be divided into three broad categories which deal with:-
 - (a) Natural objects and events.

- (b) Artificial objects and events.
- (c) Imaginary objects and events.

Examples of these classes are:-

Natural. Stars, planets, comets, birds, bats, insects, etc. and their movements. Meteors, bolides, lightning discharges, waterspouts, tornadoes, sunbeams, aurorae, ignes fatui or will o' the wisps, light pillars, mock suns, space visitors, human beings.

Artificial. Balloons, aeroplanes, artificial satellites, rockets, parachutes, radar spheres, "space grass" or radar chaff, searchlights, car headlights, alien space vehicles, hoaxes.

Imaginary. Results of defective vision, hallucinations, dreams, hypnosis, nervous disorders, image retention, insanity.

Visions and other alleged supernatural or paranormal manifestations are here classified as imaginary, although they may sometimes be associated with non-imaginary phenomena.

The list is not exhaustive but such additions as may be necessary cannot affect the overall conclusion that the only genuinely untoward items concern possible visitors from space and their craft. It is to these that most "lay" people refer when they talk about UFOs or flying saucers.

A great deal of misunderstanding arises solely from terminological inexactitude and the ufologist must constantly be on his guard against this.

Within reason slight differences in usage can be tolerated provided the ufologist indicates his choice and adheres to it. For instance Condon (Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects, p 9) says:

"An unidentified flying object is here defined as the stimulus for a report made by one or more individuals of something seen in the sky (or of an object thought to be capable of flight but seen when landed on the earth) which the observer could not identify as having an ordinary natural origin, and which seemed to him sufficiently puzzling that he undertook to make a report of it to the police, to government officials, to the press, or perhaps to a representative of a private organisation devoted to the study of such objects."

In other words Condon considers a UFO to be the visual stimulus which gives rise to a UFO report made to some relevant person or body. This is a reasonable though rather restrictive definition, but the phrase "having an ordinary natural origin" is not well chosen since it literally implies that any artifact seen in the sky must automatically be a UFO. The word "natural" means "not artificial."

Both Condon's definition and my own have one very important thing in common, however, namely that the term UFO refers to something which puzzles the OBSERVER (or observers) and not just to a sighting which remains unexplained after subsequent investigation. Insofar as Vallee attempts a definition (Anatomy of a Phenomenon, pp 96, 103) he seems to agree with this, for he says:-

"Manifestations of the UFO phenomenon are to be found among reports of the perception of a visual image, commonly interpreted by the witness as that of a material, flying object, which possesses either or both of the following properties: (a) An appearance which, to the witness, is unusual; (b) A behaviour which, to the witness, is unusual." (my italics)

The reader should note that this statement is in no wise a definition. It is not turned into one by later qualifications and is on a par with defining sharks as "free swimming marine vertebrates found amongst animals caught by fishermen," or human beings as "creatures found among warm blooded animals having a bi-pedal gait," neither of which statements is false but neither of which is sufficient to define the objects under consideration. Vallee is being deliberately non-committal and evasive. He also says (*ibid*, p 46): "A UFO sighting (is) the perception of this image by a witness."

However he then proceeds to contradict himself very quickly (*ibid* p 99) when he remarks: "For example, a witness calls the sheriff's office to report seeing a sphere in the sky. Policemen go out, observe the sphere and, by calling the local airport, determine that the origin of the sighting is a balloon tracked at that very moment by the local station. This is a true identification. Similarly, a so-called 'strange light' photographed at night is shown to fit exactly the trajectory of an artificial satellite." He concludes: "Such reports have no place in the study of UFOs." Indeed.

Vallee's comment can only be taken to mean that such sightings as these

hypothetical examples are not in his opinion UFO sightings and therefore the objects concerned are not UFOs, whereas in fact they are UFCs whose identity is later established as human artifacts, even though the time interval between making the observation and determining the cause is in one case rather abbreviated. Vallee wants to have his cake and eat it.

Apart from the fact that his position is open to doubt his conclusion is patently absurd. UFO sightings which are later explained may not be to Vallee's liking but such sightings actually furnish a highly important collection of data for comparative purposes on those occasions when identification is less readily made.

Perhaps, though, one should not be too surprised at the vagaries of an author who makes use of the vital term "UFO" over 200 times in a single book without apparently knowing what it means.

John Keel, too, for lack of a definition of the term under discussion makes some extremely illogical statements. For example (Operation Trojan Horse, p 40); "Sensible research must be dictated by this basic precept: Any acceptable theory must offer an explanation for all the data." (Keel's italics). "The parapsychological hypothesis meets this criterion. The extraterrestrial hypothesis does not."

This is the "new ufology" in a nutshell, but what of the metal spheres, space grass, pure magnesium, ubiquitous slag and other "space junk" that Keel makes such a palaver about? Are all these things "parapsychological"? I think not. Nor are the large numbers of stars, planets, satellites, balloons, aeroplanes, bolides, lenticular clouds, etc., sightings of which form the basis of so many UFO reports.

Keel's statement is nonsense. Neither of the hypotheses which he mentions can cover all the UFO data and the only way he can manage to give his remark the slightest air of plausibility is by using the term UFO in a multitude of different senses to suit his caprice. Such verbal juggling is typical of the "new ufology" and its proponents and in my opinion is sufficient, in itself, to damage their case almost beyond redemption.

If the foregoing were all, it might be possible to offer an excuse on the grounds that words are imperfect tools for conveying ideas and that a certain latitude must be allowed, but it is only the beginning. In order to carry this assessment further it becomes necessary to investigate the reliability of the new ufologists as commentators, reporters and critics and I shall attempt to do this under various headings which are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Pseudo-statistics

Any attempt to bring some order into the welter of UFO reports inevitably leads towards some form of statistical treatment even though it may not be designated as such and is on a very low level of competence.

Many scathing attacks have been made on "official" classifications because of an alleged tendency to dispose of awkward reports under the heading of "insufficient information for evaluation" or the equivalent (Anatomy of a Phenomenon, p 102), but what of the new ufologists? What sort of an example do they set in this matter?

I have already remarked that neither John Keel nor Jacques Vallee is prepared to identify the term UFO and indeed Vallee, in the days when he believed in the extraterrestrial hypothesis, devoted a great deal of his book Anatomy of a Phenomenon to a discussion of terminology and classification without, in my opinion, achieving anything of much value because of his basic refusal to define what he meant by a UFO. In Passport to Magoria he seems to have abandoned any pretence at scientific impartiality and admits as much in his preface.

John Keel, however, does make some attempt in Operation Trojan Horse, chapter one, to prepare the reader for what follows by a pathetically weak and inept excursion into the realm of statistical analysis under the heading of "Patterns of the Phenomenon." He writes: "More than 10,000 clippings and reports reached me in 1966 (in contrast with the 1,060 reports allegedly received by the AF during that same period)," (Keel's italics).

Notice the attempted slur on the Air Force—10,000 to 1,000 in favour of Keel! Notice also, though, the trick of logic which he employs—he is not comparing the same things. His 10,000 items comprise two separate classes, clippings and reports, whereas the 1,060 Air Force items are down as reports only. The comparison is thus meaningless and misleading.

"Throughout 1967", continues Keel, "I devoted my spare time to sorting this great mass of material, categorising it, and boiling it down to valid statistical form.

"I threw out most of the 'lights in the sky' types of reports and concentrated on the Type I cases." (Low level objects observed and reported by reliable witnesses). (my italics).

This "throwing out" is hardly likely to inspire the reader with much

confidence in Keel's subsequent analysis or his abilities as a statistician. "I ended up with two files," he says, "one containing the Type I sightings (730 in all or 7.3 percent of the total); and the other the best of the Type II sightings (high altitude objects performing in a controlled manner and distinct from normal aircraft and natural phenomena)." (my italics).

Having experienced considerable difficulty in evaluating UFO reports myself I am agog to learn what mystique Keel invoked in assessing the "best" sightings and the "reliable witnesses." Unfortunately he does not see fit to enlighten his readers on this vital matter.

"Thus," he continues, "I was working on 33.3 percent of the total" and adds: "Radio and TV surveys which rule the industry work on a far smaller sampling, claiming that a survey of 1,500 TV viewers represents the viewing habits of the whole country." What Keel apparently fails to realise is that professional statisticians go to considerable trouble to select a random sample whereas he has messed about with his sample in such a way as to render it virtually worthless. In view of the fact that we know nothing of his selection rules his subsequent argument and conclusions are mere meaningless verbiage. Unfortunately most of the statistical comments in the UFO literature are on a similarly low level.

On the above evidence the new ufologists are in no position to criticise the analytical work of any of the official investigators including the Condon team. In particular Vallee is quite unjustified in deriding the Condon Report as a "piece of scientific recklessness," although there are certainly some valid criticisms which can be levelled against it; for instance its slipshod treatment of some unexplained radar-visual sightings, such as the puzzling Lakenheath affair to which Dr McDonald devoted so much attention (Flying Saucer Review, 16:2) and the Washington, D.C., sightings.

Misinformation

On page seven of Anatomy of a Phenomenon one reads: "The observation made in 1290 at Byland Abbey, Yorkshire, of a large silvery disc flying slowly is a classical one and can be found in a number of books."

Vallee does not enlarge on this theme but has clearly included this reference for a purpose, namely to add yet another case to his list of mysterious aerial sightings from the past which he is building up into "The legend of flying saucers." According to the Condon Report, if I may be allowed to use this abbreviation, the Byland Abbey case was investigated with some tenacity (pp 493-495) with the result that the following telegram was received from a correspondent in London: "Have checked with college stop Ampleforth document a hoax perpetrated by two sixth form schoolboys in letter to Times (London) regards.!"

Notice Vallee's use of the prestigious term "classical" in his account. The appellation "classical" or "classic" seems to be used here to confer a spurious aura of sanctity on an otherwise disreputable report. The word comes from the Latin "classicus" meaning first class or first rate. First rate rubbish, it would seem.

John Keel describes Truman Bethurum's "Aboard a Flying Saucer" fantasies as "classic" (Operation Trojan Horse, pp 237-8). Vallee, however, in this case remarks: (Anatomy of a Phenomenon, p 124) "But I do not think anyone has ever been seriously worried by childish descriptions of space conditions copied from newspapers, comics or stories whose author is said to have landed on Venus or on the mysterious planet Clarion, permanently hidden by the Moon!" Quite right, but in Passport to Magonia Vallee is reduced to a puerile acceptance of equally pathetic descriptions in a manner suggestive of a drowning man clutching desperately at the proverbial straw.

On a more ordinary level there are Keel's references to meteors, comets, etc., in chapter 8 of Operation Trojan Horse. On page 144 he writes: "Thousands of actual unidentified flying objects are erroneously explained away as meteors every year. (my italics) Usually no one bothers to collect these meteor reports, lay them out on a map, and study them properly. Astronomers seem least interested of all." And later: "Meteors and comets are vital important to our study of unexplained aerial phenomena. They reveal patterns which indicate that they follow precise routes year after year and even operate on a predictable timetable. This certainly suggests an intelligent plan of some sort." (my italics).

Apart from the question of what Mr Keel means by actual unidentified flying objects as distinct from any other kind one can only wonder at his abysmal ignorance of astronomical matters which he claims are of the utmost importance to ufology. "What is a meteor anyway?" asks Keel. (Operation Trojan Horse, p 166).

Certainly astronomers in the main are not specially concerned with meteors which happen to be reported as UFOS, but large numbers of astronomers busy themselves with making meteor observations, estimating frequencies and determining radiants or

points in the sky from which the meteors appear to diverge. It is quite false to state that astronomers have failed to pursue investigations on lines similar to those indicated by Keel. (See the Condon Report, p 683, etc). Hey and Stewart used radar methods for studying meteors as far back as 1945 and a team at Jodrell Bank was operative by October, 1946, in time for the Giacobinid shower that month. Since then radar astronomy has gone from strength to strength.

Incidentally, meteors are not all of the same type and it is the "shower" meteors which are predominantly associated with particular known cometary orbits; they can be predicted as showers—but not individually—from the known orbital parameters.

To suggest that comets and their associated meteoroids move in predictable orbits because of some "intelligent plan" is absolute and unmitigated rubbish. They require divine guidance no more than do orbiting spacecraft.

Again, describing a bolide seen at 8.15 p.m. on Monday, April 25 1966, Keel remarks that a Dr Nicholson from the Hayden Planetarium estimated the mass of the associated body as "several hundred pounds" and continues: "However, Dr Fred L. Whipple, director of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Massachusetts, disagreed with his colleague and announced that 'it must have been less than the size of a football!'"

The impression which Keel attempts to give is one of a great discrepancy and conflict of opinion, but when one reflects that a football filled with meteoritic nickel-iron would weigh over 100 pounds the disagreement, considering the subject, is seen not have been necessarily very profound. A 300 lb sphere of nickel-iron would only have a diameter of about a foot compared with a mean diameter of some nine or ten inches for a football. Since any estimate of the size of the meteoroid could only have been approximate I should not be surprised if the astronomers did in fact qualify their opinions accordingly. Certainly professional prudence would dictate such a procedure.

On the subject of metal spheres John Keel notes (Operation Trojan Horse, pp 175-6) that allegedly mysterious objects of this class have been found in Australia where, he says, "scientists were baffled," Monterrey (Mexico), Conway (Arkansas), the Argentine, Africa and France. "Where is all this junk coming from?" Keel asks, and replies: "Why, the answer is simple; from the same place as the stone pillars of earlier times." I rather doubt this.

Keel describes the Arkansas sphere as being made of stainless steel but Dr R. Craig writing in the Condon Report (Scientific Study of UFOs, p 92) says: "Metal spheres a foot or two in diameter have also been found in fields or woods and reported as mysterious UFOs or UFO evidence. These hollow spheres actually are targets used to calibrate radar sets. One such object, not considered an UFO by the finder in this case, but arousing widespread interest, was found on an Arkansas farm on 3 November 1967. The sphere had been manufactured by the Universal Metal Spinning Company of Albuquerque, N.M. for the Physical Science Laboratory of New Mexico State University at Las Cruces.

"These spheres, according to the manufacturer, are made of aluminum (my italics), vary in diameter from 3 3/16 inches to 23 inches and are deployed from aircraft, balloons and rockets. They are normally dropped only in uninhabited regions. Such spheres, found in Australia, were mentioned in a UFO context by Edwards (1967)" — and now by Keel who, once again, gives his readers misleading information. It certainly seems unlikely that the Biblical "stone pillars" had the same origin as the metal radar calibration spheres.

To return briefly to the subject of "meteors" the example mentioned by Keel on p 149 of Operation Trojan Horse is extremely instructive in the present context, the more so because it also shows clearly the perils of imprecise terminology. The report which Keel quotes goes as follows: "November 21, 1779. A strange meteor was seen in the south, just as the sun went down. It appear'd like a ball of fire and left a long trail of light—something like the turnings of a corkscrew—visible for near an hour."

This was, of course, a bolide or fireball produced by a sizeable meteoroid in its passage through the atmosphere and the trail would have been a mixture of ablation products and, initially at least, ionised gas plus, possibly, condensed water vapour such as appears in the trails of high-flying aircraft.

The trail of the Sikhote-Alin meteorite remained visible for several hours, so Keel's sarcastic comment: "A meteor visible for near an hour!" is quite uncalled for, especially in view of the fact that aircraft trails are frequently observable after such a period of time. At sunset such trails can remain illuminated by the sun long after it has disappeared from the sight of an observer at ground level.

Once again we are bothered by Keel's indiscriminate use of the word "meteor" in which he follows the example of the observer reporting in 1779. If "meteor" is restricted to an object no brighter than the brightest planet and if

phenomena of the kind under consideration are termed "bolide" or "fireball" a good deal of confusion will be eliminated. In this sense Keel would be correct in supposing that a meteor remaining visible for an hour would be peculiar, to say the least. An ordinary "shooting star" trail usually lasts a matter of seconds or even a fraction of a second visually though occasionally very bright ones may persist a little longer. It is up to Keel to utilise the terms in a more sensible manner in future, but if he did so his ability to mislead would then be greatly reduced and this might not suit his purpose. Judging from his other comments pertaining to the subject of meteors, bolides and meteorites he would, however, still have plenty of scope for confusing his readers.

Keel seems to be determined to do just this for he states categorically (*ibid p 149*) that: "Meteors don't change direction or angle of descent." Assuming for the purpose of discussion that he is actually referring to the entry phenomena of meteoroids large enough to produce bright fireballs there is absolutely no reason why such an object should pursue a perfectly straight course. Even the returning Apollo spacecraft "bounce" when they enter the atmosphere and this effect must be strictly controlled if a safe landing is to be achieved.

Indeed photographs of some known meteorites prior to landing have been taken which show the corkscrew paths pursued by them in the air during descent. Anyone who has looked along the flight path of a rolling aeroplane will have seen the same effect.

Meteorites are not aerodynamically perfect and as a result the varying pressures on their different surfaces can be sufficient to induce substantial departures from a "straight" trajectory. As is so often the case Keel's comments are uninformed and incorrect.

Up to this point I have been considering cases with which I have had no direct connection but to complete this section I shall examine two aspects of our subject which I have investigated personally.

The first of these concerns a well-known British UFO personality, Mr Arthur Shuttlewood, who has become a convert to the "new ufology" and who resides in the pleasant town of Warminster on the edge of Salisbury Plain, near to the army ranges at Imber.

Warminster and Arthur Shuttlewood have become famous for the extraordinary amount of UFO activity with which they are associated. Gullibility, wishful thinking, belief in the supernatural and sheer ignorance are prime factors in the generation and acceptance of UFO reports. The new ufologists devote much energy to the encouragement of these human failings, which can be seen in operation at almost any gathering of UFO enthusiasts, but nowhere better than at Warminster where contactee, author and journalist Arthur Shuttlewood has directed affairs for several years and has worked up a fine air of mystery and an enormous collection of spurious sightings have been generated. The technique is crude but enlightening.

I can well remember an occasion, for example, when a group of eager enthusiasts were gathered on Cradle Hill just outside the town and a thunderstorm was in progress lowdown on the horizon. Mr Shuttlewood suddenly drove off at a fast pace chasing after the distant lightning flashes, apparently under the delusion that they were some form of UFO manifestation. On another evening he made a great attempt to convince those present that a rising star—Arcturus—appearing over a neighbouring hill was a UFO. It was only with considerable difficulty that he was finally convinced of the true nature of this object. At other times he pointed excitedly to distant car headlights, aeroplanes whose engines could not be heard and artificial satellites.

Great fun was had by all but no UFOs were seen—sceptics were about and thoughtlessly destroyed the vibrations. Shuttlewood's subsequent meeting with a blue-lipped "Aenstrian" as Arthur called him must have been a traumatic experience.

My co-editor John Harney and I were actually in the town at the time of this extraordinary event but were unfortunately not amongst those present when the spaceman called at the Shuttlewood residence. The presence of critical observers at the Warminster shenanigans is, of course, abhorred by the management. For some reason John Keel gives Mr Shuttlewood honourable mention in Operation Trojan Horse, (p 229) although he is at fault in describing him as editor of the Warminster Journal.

Keel's remark that Shuttlewood had never heard of Virgil's Aeneid is nevertheless not much of a compliment to pay a fellow journalist and contactee, but despite this handicap I doubt very much that Arthur was indebted to any elementals for the names of his principal "Aenstrian" characters, as suggested by Keel.

I am equally doubtful about the necessity for accepting the presence of so-called "ultraterrestrials" or quasi-human spirit entities in the vicinity of Salisbury Plain to account for the sightings and contacts there—or even for the strange smells which sometimes pervade the air. There are some much more commonplace

explanations to hand.

On a less parochial note one cannot help suspecting that Warminster has its counterparts elsewhere in the world, e.g. High Bridge, N.J., where contactee Howard Menger once resided, but unfortunately when geography puts such centres of activity beyond one's reach his conclusions must be tentative. This applies in some measure to all localities at which one is not present when sightings are made and means, of course, that many UFO reports are little better than hearsay.

The ufologist is therefore at the mercy of witnesses, local investigators and writers whose reliability is all too often suspect. Arthur Shuttlewood's latest book UFOs - Key to the New Age does not exactly quell one's misgivings.

The last item which I shall discuss in this section concerns a case of marks on the ground, allegedly of UFO significance, which I investigated thoroughly and found to have a perfectly natural explanation but one which is not mentioned by Jacques Vallee, from whom I quote (Passport to Magonia, pp 35-37):

"July 16th, 1963, will long be remembered in the annals of British ufology. Something appeared to have landed in farmer Roy Blanchard's field at the Manor Farm, Charlton, Wiltshire. ... The marks on the ground were first discovered by a farm worker, Reg Alexander. They overlapped a potato field and a barley field. The marks comprised a saucer shaped depression or crater eight feet in diameter and about four inches in depth. In the centre of this depression was found a three feet deep hole variously described as from five inches to one foot in diameter. Radiating from the central hole were four slot marks, four feet long and one foot wide."

Mine detectors behaved strangely and apparently indicated a metallic object of some size.

Patrick Moore, the amateur astronomer, put forward the suggestion that the disturbance had been caused by a small meteorite, but no such object or fragments of it were found even when a large pit was dug in an effort to locate the source of the anomalous magnetic readings.

It was suggested that a space ship had landed at the spot but no material evidence of its presence was discovered. I shall not go into detail here since I understand that John Harney, principal editor of the Bulletin, is going to cover the Charlton Crater, as it was called, in his series of articles on the "Physical Evidence."

Suffice to say that I brought to light certain* facts which pointed unequivocally to a natural origin for the "crater." The main clues to the solution of the mystery were, firstly, that as the site was excavated the magnetic effects gradually died away; secondly, that the ground contained a considerable amount of modular limonite and disseminated grains of magnetite, or magnetic iron ore; and thirdly, that the area had been struck by a severe thunderstorm a short time previously, important information not given by Vallee who says, apropos the Moore "meteorite": "Thus ended the mystery as far as the scientific public ~~were~~ concerned," and, on a mysterious note: "But the true facts of the matter, as they became known to a few scientists who pursued the matter further and to the Army Engineers who were in charge of the investigation were altogether different," and later, concerning this and some "circular" features in Australia and America: "Do I need to remind the reader of the celebrated habit of the fairies, to leave behind them strange rings in the fields and prairies?" (My italics).

My interpretation, after a brief dalliance with the notion of subsidence, had nothing whatever to do with alleged fairies or their rings, celebrated or otherwise.

Vallee remarks: "The effect of a very strong vertical force is often noticed" (in Charlton-type cases) "as evidenced by earth and plants scattered round the site," and "a deep hole, a few inches in diameter, is often present at the centre."

I will merely say that the obvious inference from this is the probability that a small explosion has occurred and I will draw the reader's attention to the peculiar objects known as fulgarites which are found in beach sand after thunderstorms. In the case of the Charlton "crater" I found it necessary to discard all previous theories and so must reserve judgement on the Australian and American (Ohio) phenomena, but as there was no evidence for fairy operations at Charlton I see no reason to suppose that the so-called "little people" were active on the other sites either. Vallee's supposition is quite unfounded but I shall examine the question of fairies and their rings in the next section.

Fairies, Fairy Rings, Folklore, Fatui, Fungi and Fantasy

Incredible though it may seem Vallee pursues the subject of fairy rings as if he actually believes that they have a supernatural origin and regales his readers with information like the following:

"Another writer, reporting on Scandinavian legends, noted that elves are depicted there as beings with oversize heads, tiny legs and long arms. They are responsible for the bright green circles, called elf-dans (or fairy rings) which one sees on the lawns." (Passport to Magonia, pp 37-39).

Vallee does not, as one would expect him to do as a knowledgeable person, pour scorn on this item of folklore. Instead he takes the opportunity to ridicule Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles Darwin). Rationalism, "scholars" and modern physics!

He says: "It is amusing to note that attempts have been made, in the early days of Rationalism, to explain fairy rings as electrical phenomena, a consequence of atmospheric effects," and "according to Erasmus Darwin: 'There is a phenomenon, supposed to be electric, which is not yet accounted for; I mean the fairy rings, as they are called, so often seen on the grass.'" Darwin discussed the matter further but Vallee sarcastically comments: "The formulation of this idea in terms of modern plasma physics will no doubt soon be provided by eager scholars. They would do well, however, to note the diameter of the cylinder mentioned by the elder Darwin, 'two to ten yards'—the diameter of the average saucer." Would they indeed!

When one considers that Vallee has the advantage of nearly two hundred years of scientific progress he does not appear to me to have enhanced his reputation as a scientist by his attack on Darwin senior.

It seems that Vallee is unaware of the origin of the rings on the grass or if he is aware he carelessly keeps his readers in ignorance of the truth, for he nowhere mentions the fact that "fairy rings" are caused by the radial growth of fungal mycelium in the ground, the correct explanation.

I am interested to know what statistics he used in computing the diameter of the "average" flying saucer. Two to ten yards is surely rather an imprecise estimate of an average anything although the mean of these figures is interestingly very near to the average diameter of the fungal rings which I measured in the fields this summer and autumn. I was unfortunately not privileged to measure the diameters of any flying saucers.

Various species of ground fungus give rise to so-called "fairy rings", including the following:

Agaricus campestris — the field mushroom, or common wild mushroom.

Marasmius oreades — the Fairy Ring Champignon.

Tricholoma gambosum — the St George's mushroom.

Tricholoma personatum — the Blewits, or Blue Legs,

all of which have edible fruit bodies.

The Horse Mushroom, *agaricus arvensis*, is also edible and its white cap may have a diameter equal to that of a dinner plate. In South America mushrooms may well exceed the British species in size, so there is no reason to suppose that there was anything unnatural about the Necochea, Argentina, examples mentioned by Vallee in a UFO context on p 38 of Passport to Magonia.

There is nothing paranormal about mushrooms and the ones I picked and ate during the daytime were very real and very tasty—and were unattended by any dancing fairies garbed in green or red apparel or garments of any other colour for that matter. There were no fairies to be seen at night, either, although there were plenty of creatures about including owls, bats, foxes, badgers, hedgehogs and rabbits.

So much, then, for "fairy rings" and, as the rings have a perfectly natural origin, so much for the supposed elementals who are said to construct them.

There are a good many possible explanations for yarns about alleged quasi-human beings and John Keel gives us a clue to one of them when he writes, apropos the so-called "little people": "We call them elementals, too. In story after story, the witnesses encountered them near swamps, lakes and rivers, (my italics) often carrying out the same actions so often reported by UFO witnesses. Flying lights and spheres were said to accompany fairies and little people."

Ignis fatuus or will o' the wisps without a doubt. In times past when fens and bogland had not been extensively drained the combustion of escaping gases from rotting vegetation was a far more common spectacle than it is nowadays. I have only seen ignis fatuus a few times but I can vouch for the eeriness of the phenomenon. It is not hard to envisage the effect it would have on an ignorant and/or superstitious witness.

The spontaneous inflammability may be due to the presence of hydrogen phosphide, P_2H_4 , although atmospheric electricity may initiate burning. The colour is pale yellow or pale blue, rather like the colours of a bunsen burner flame, and

the appearance is of gently oscillating lights and slowly moving luminous globes. It has been suggested that there may be some phosphorescent effect present.

Mr Keel is certainly quite right to draw attention to such a matter and to the similarity between certain UFO sightings and some events which have been ascribed to alleged supernatural phenomena, e.g. activities of so-called "elementals", visions of religious figures and so forth. The trouble is that he is like a golfer who shuts his eyes when playing a stroke. He doesn't get what he is looking at, figuratively speaking, in perspective. The golfer misses the ball. Keel misses the point.

The fact is not that some UFOs are supernatural manifestations but that some UFOs and some allegedly supernatural manifestations have a common origin in misidentified natural or artificial phenomena or activities, or even in hallucinations, optical defects, etc.

Keel's logic is faulty and, indofar as Vallee follows him in concluding that UFOs are supernatural, para this, that or the other, etc., so is his logic too. Neither draws the correct conclusions from the evidence.

Other Supernatural Entities

It is easy enough to drivel on about supernatural entities when nothing much is forfeit, but suppose that Keel and Vallee were injured in a car crash and the insurance company refused to pay damages on the grounds that the other driver had been distracted by a fairy or molested by an elemental. I daresay there would be a few ripe comments to be heard from our disgruntled new ufologists! Would they believe a railwayman if he claimed that a sprite had interfered with the controls and caused a major rail disaster? I sincerely hope not.

Yet they apparently expect their readers to accept equally far-fetched rubbish when presented in a UFO context.

Consider the account given by Vallee in chapter 3 of Passport to Magonia, "The Secret Commonwealth", (p 63):-

'In the early 17th century, the cathedral of Quimper-Corentin, France, had on its roof a pyramid covered with lead. On February 1, 1620, between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m., thunder fell on that pyramid and it caught fire, exploded, and fell down with a stupendous noise. People rushed to the cathedral from all parts of the town and saw, in the midst of the lightning and smoke, a demon, of a green colour, with a long green tail, doing his best to keep the fire going.'

What is Vallee's purpose in regaling his long-suffering readers with this item of nonsense? Surely he must be aware of the flame test in elementary chemistry and of the green colour imparted to the flame by copper, an element commonly used in the roof construction of important medieval buildings and often present as an impurity in lead?

But he does not care to give us the benefit of his scientific wisdom and tells us instead that the authorities quelled the "demon" by throwing on the fire a quantity of Agni Dei, close to 150 buckets of water, forty or fifty cartloads of manure, a consecrated host placed inside a loaf of bread, and finally some blessed water mixed with milk given by a nurse of above reproach conduct! Vive le sport!

Surely even Vallee must have had a good laugh over this one (I hope) but the context is obviously not intended to be humorous. He wants us to believe in the "Secret Commonwealth" and tries to bludgeon us into submission with a wearying succession of such awesome yarns. This is an old trick of authors who are attempting to bolster up a weak case and it does not endear me to the new ufologists. The efforts of Keel and Vallee to make us believe in hobgoblins and hocus-pocus should make us doubly wary of the copious reports of alleged supernatural entities and manifestations handed down from the past.

It is, after all, not so long since people believed in the quasi-human nature of mermaids and sirens which, though based on reality, are now known to have a perfectly natural explanation.

Some of the little people mentioned by Keel and Vallee may have their origin in a genuine sub-species of homo sapiens, though this does not seem very likely. For in his book Fossil Man, M.H.Day remarks: "Quite suddenly the Neanderthalers vanished from the scene. How and why they became extinct is still something of a mystery but they could have been wiped out by the invasion of more advanced men, or assimilated into the evolving population of modern man, or they may even have given rise to modern man. It is not impossible that all three processes took place to produce the same result." (p 131)

Then, in his consideration of the Cro-Magnon race, who also lived during the Upper Pleistocene, Day says: "The origin of these people is in some doubt because of the scarcity of the remains of their possible ancestors, for example Swanscombe or Steinheim. Similarly the relation of these people to the Neanderthalers is unknown, however at least some of the Cro-Magnon people were contemporaneous

with the later Neanderthalers. It may be that Cro-Magnon man displaced, or over-ran and inter-bred with, the last of the Neanderthalers at the close of the last glaciation and therefore the modern sapient stock emerged as the final product of hominid evolution." (p 133)

The successors of Cro-Magnon man belong to the cultural phase known as the Neolithic Period. By this time, about 8,000 years B.P. (before the present), the climate, as well as the plants and animals were much as they are today. Menes the first king of the first dynasty in Egypt lived over 5,000 years ago and civilisation was by then well launched.

Both Neanderthal man and Cro-Magnon man had brain capacities at least as large as ours, but whereas Cro-Magnon was tall and possessed a good chin and high forehead, Homo sapiens neanderthalensis had pronounced brow ridges, a low forehead, a receding chin and short stature—in brief was rather bestial looking, although there is evidence that some later Neanderthalers possessed more modern-looking faces.

Whether any pockets of Neanderthal stock could have survived until comparatively recent times and given rise to some of the legends of certain types of hairy dwarfs is a moot point. On balance the likelihood seems extremely remote but it is possible that pygmies, at least, were once considerably more widespread than now. Although Neanderthalers and Cro-Magnons lived in caves they had both learned how to make tools and fire and had evolved a ritualistic manner of burying their dead. They were, of course, by no means ethereal beings. (See Passport to Magonia, pp 72-3 etc.)

At all events such considerations do not support a belief in the existence of ephemeral quasi-human beings as repeatedly suggested by the new ufologists. Nor does archaeological or palaeontological evidence give the slightest encouragement to the view currently in vogue in some ufological circles and hinted at by Keel and Vallee that our forebears were spacemen who arrived on earth a few thousand years ago.

There is, as one might expect, a considerable confusion about the attributes of the so-called "little people"—elves, fafardets, fenlanders, fairies, etc.—and their aerial equivalents and it is likely that a number of different explanations are involved.

I have already indicated that ignes fatui were connected with some sightings but this does not solve the problem of the black, hairy creatures. If however one considers the descriptions given by Keel in this context a definite picture begins to emerge.

First of all the creatures are dark in colour, are hairy and have hands terminating in talons, i.e. claws. They have "old" faces and "hollow eyes, small and bright like burning coals." Their voices are low "as if broken with age," i.e. thin and piping. (Passport to Magonia, p 67) Also, "They speak very little. When they do so, when they talk among themselves, their language is a kind of whistling sound." (ibid, p 65) In addition: "They live inside the earth in caves, which they can reach through any crevice or opening through which air passes." In other words they are, in fact, small animals.

"Their chameleon-like bodies allow them to swim through the air with all their household." i.e. they can merge with their background and fly through the air. i.e. they have wings.

What, then, is small, furry, dark, lives in caves, flies, squeaks and has little, deep-set, bright eyes and long claws?

There are no prizes for the correct answer to this conundrum—a BAT! So here we have another natural contributor to the "entity" stakes. Owls, too, must surely take their place in the eerie squad.

All in all it is reasonable to conclude that there is no shortage of rational natural explanations for the mysterious manifestations and amazing apparitions accorded such awesome attention by the new ufologists.

Archaeology, Ancient "Sightings" and the ETH

I have already considered some matters which have a bearing on the past in a ufological context but feel that some additional treatment is required on account of the peculiar way the new ufologists have of quoting, in a most uncritical manner, items which seem to support the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis, or ETH, but of then failing to draw the obvious conclusion and of denying the ETH in favour of the hypothesis of supernatural entities as the causative agencies for unexplained UFO phenomena.

Vallee, for instance, on page 2 of Passport to Magonia, gets off to a quick start in this respect when he discusses a peculiar design on a Maya Palenque sarcophagus, which: "appears to show a man at the controls of an intricate piece of machinery." Vallee says: "The only object we know today closely resembling the Maya design is the space capsule," and quotes Kazantsev's suggestion that: "the

Mayans had actually been in contact with visitors from a superior civilisation—visitors who used spaceships," without the slightest hint of criticism.

He then proceeds to discuss some ancient, circa 6,000 B.P., Japanese statues and remarks: "The resemblance of the Dogu costume to a pressure suit of the type used by divers and astronauts is the relevant factor here. It has led some students of the Jomon Era to speculate that the statues might indicate the distant memory of visitors from space. The headgear with its filter, the large goggles, the necks with wide collars, and the one-piece suits certainly bear a close resemblance to modern space gear."

Vallee's comment on these things seems to me to be both irrelevant and illogical, for he says: "Altogether the Far East is a rich source of reports of supernatural beings and celestial signs, as we shall now see."

But we do not "now see" and it is far from apparent to this ufologist why "supernatural beings" should find it necessary to make use of modern-looking space suits.

Certainly nothing which follows throws much light on the matter, for the next mentioned Japanese reported sighting, apart from a fairly obvious bolide in October, 1180 AD, is dated September 24, 1235 AD, some 5,500 years later and concerns a vague report of "mysterious sources of light (which) were seen to swing and circle in the southwest, moving in loops until the early morning." One is tempted to say "ignes fatui" and at all events the explanation advanced at the time made no mention of supernatural beings or celestial signs but laid the blame on the atmosphere.

In another consideration of ancient times John Keel remarks that: "Fireballs and thunderbolts from the angry skies apparently wreaked a lot of havoc in Biblical times," and: "Some scholarly scientists have suggested that these accounts sound suspiciously like atomic explosions,.....in an article in Moscow's Literaturnaya Gazeta in 1959, Professor Agrest offered the startling theory that ancient Baalbek was the Cape Kennedy of its day, serving as a launching platform for spaceships from another civilisation. His 'proof' consisted of the tektites and fused crystals found there.

"Such substances are the by products of atomic explosions," comments Keel.

What is Keel's purpose in retailing Prof. Agrest's far-fetched speculation? At best it is sensationalist padding and in any case Keel is quite wrong in saying that tektites are the by products of atomic explosions. Radioactive dating of tektites shows them to have ages ranging between 300,000 and 30,000,000 years (Geochim et Cosmochim Acta, 1960, 20, pp 101-114), scarcely compatible with the less than 2,000 years of the Baalbek platform which forms the base of the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, built by the Romans between the first and third centuries AD.

As for the "fireballs and thunderbolts", such things have caused damage in other than Biblical times, as witness the case of the cathedral of Quimper Corentin which I mentioned earlier. The metal lightning conductor was not invented until the middle of the eighteenth century and prior to this many bell-ringers were killed as a result of strikes on church towers. Large numbers of animals and even human beings are killed by lightning annually but most strikes on land go to unprotected buildings, trees, fences and the ground itself.

According to Lane, (The Elements Rage, p 97) there are, throughout the world, an estimated 16,000,000 thunderstorms per annum, and at any given moment about 1,800 are taking place. No doubt the total was similar in Biblical times. To the ancients, lightning was something supernatural and hence strikes were then regarded with a good deal more awe than they are today.

Visions

The next items which I shall consider in this assessment of the new ufology and which receive special attention in books by Keel and Vallee come under the heading of visions, i.e. hallucinatory experiences, in part at least.

The Fatima "miracle", (Operation Trojan Horse, pp 256-264, "A major miracle", and Anatomy of a Phenomenon, pp 148-151, "Fatima: the miraculous UFO") concerns the alleged experiences of three young children in Portugal during the First World War, or Great War, over 50 years ago now. Vallee quotes Antonio Ribera on the subject as follows: "These children's sightings would today be included among the contact claims," whilst Keel, who gives a more complete and fulsome account padded out with much comment of varying worth, remarks: "Fatima was...obviously a carefully planned and deliberately executed demonstration," for which statement I can find absolutely no justification, but he also writes: "The Lady who has been so glorified by the religionists may merely be a variation of Aura Rhanea," which seems to be a bit nearer the mark and agrees more or less with Ribera's assessment.

What appears to have happened, bearing in mind the untrustworthiness of the new ufologists and the questionable integrity of the reports made at the time, is that

several illiterate and impressionable young peasant children, some of whom had lively imaginations and were prone to "see things" observed, or thought they observed, some peculiar optical phenomena which they interpreted for themselves and/or with assistance from other people as having a supernatural religious nature. The girl called Lucia Ababora seems to have been the ringleader and in the later alleged experiences at least was the eldest of the three children then involved, whose ages were 10, 9 and 7. It is noteworthy that the children's stories did not always tally with each other or with the testimony of other people who were present. For instance on June 13, 1917: "One of the witnesses, a woman named Marcia Carriera, testified that she saw nothing when the children suddenly knelt and began talking to an unseen entity.²

Again: "On July 13th 1917 a much larger crowd gathered as the three children knelt and addressed the entity which only they could see," (my italics) but in fact, "they never really saw anything but a luminous figure. No hair or features were apparently visible." (Operation Trojan Horse, p 259)

On September 13 the Rev. Dr. Manuel Nunes Fromigao, canon of the cathedral at Lisbon and Professor at the Seminary at Santarem, was among those present. "He later wrote that he noticed a peculiar dimming of the sun in the cloudless sky as the children went into their ~~exact~~ trance, but he failed to see the luminous globe reported by the other witnesses." (my italics)

Keel continues: "Up to this time the Lady had not identified herself in any manner. She had been seen only by the three children and her voice had been heard by just Lucia and Jacinto." (my italics)

On October 13 an estimated 70,000 people gathered at the Cova da Iria "in anticipation of the promised miracle."

"The three children gathered with their parents in front of the little tree and waited. Shortly after noon, Lucia gasped, and her upraised face flushed as she entered a rapturous trance. The Lady had arrived, even though the crowd saw nothing." (my italics)

So it all boils down to this, as one might have suspected:- the girl Lucia, who was evidently rather odd, claimed to see and hear peculiar things and influenced her two friends with varying success to back her up. The seven-year-old was evidently the more amenable to suggestion, which is not surprising. So far the whole rigmarole was much as usual but then, according to Professor Alameida Garrett, a scientist whose discipline is not mentioned by Keel or Vallee: "It was raining hard and the rain trickled down everyone's clothes. Suddenly the sun shone through the dense cloud which covered it, everybody looked in its direction. It looked like a disc of very definite contour." (It would.) "It was not dazzling. I don't think it could be compared to a dull, silver disc, as someone said later at Fatima. No. It rather possessed a clear, changing brightness, which one could compare to a pearl. It looked like a polished wheel. This is not poetry. My eyes have seen it. This clear-shaped disc suddenly began turning. It rotated with increasing speed. Suddenly, the crowd began crying with anguish. The sun, revolving all the time, began falling toward the earth."

Needless to say the sun did not fall toward the earth and did not revolve, although the motion of the cloud and the exercise of looking up may have given that impression. Then there are the conflicting descriptions, "like a pearl" and "like a polished wheel." Clearly the accounts must not be taken too literally.

So it turns out simply that a large crowd turned up expecting to see something strange—and saw the sun.

Confirmation of this is given by the reports that the same object was seen at distances of 11 and 25 miles (18 and 40 km) from Fatima. It is scarcely credible that any local supernatural vision at Fatima could have been seen by an observer 25 miles away on an overcast day. On the other hand it is quite possible that an improvement in the weather could have affected an observation of the sun at such a distance.

So the alleged miracle was probably nothing more than the sun becoming visible through thinning cloud plus a large amount of wishful thinking, as a result of which an official "miracle" was proclaimed and Fatima became a place of pilgrimage for the faithful. As they say hereabouts: "There's nowt so queer as folk." Much ado about nothing, in fact. The miraculous cures which took place were presumably in the nature of "faith healing," a sort of super Coué effect, one might say.

It is interesting to learn that the alleged entity, the so-called "Lady of the Rosary," took the opportunity to admonish erring humanity on the error of its ways. A similar moralising note is struck by many UFO contactees and "entities" and this has an important bearing on the psychological aspect of contact cases, pointing to an explanation in terms of wish fulfilment and mental aberration.

As the other visionary items mentioned by Keel, at Garabandal, Heede and Lourdes, seem to have marked similarities to the Fatima affair there is little point in considering them except to say that they reinforce the conclusion that there is an obvious parallel between such happenings and many of the UFO contact stories. They are an interesting part, but only a part, of the UFO scene.

As for the lack of photographs of the Fatima object which so exercises John Keel it should be unnecessary to point out that a camera, set presumably for ordinary exposures on a dull day, would hardly be expected to provide much of a result if pointed directly at the sun. Keel's fantasies about mysterious persons going round confiscating all pictures and secreting them away in some inaccessible repository are quite ludicrous and his conclusion that Fatima was "obviously a carefully planned and deliberately executed demonstration" by the "ultraterrestrials" is quite unwarranted.

More Contact Cases

The new ufologists concern themselves greatly with reports of alleged meetings between human beings and quasi-human entities which seem to vary from peculiar lights on the one hand to quite substantial persons indistinguishable physically from human beings on the other; Aura Rhane for example.

In between these extremes there is a whole range of creatures of essentially human form but possessed of some unusual attribute or other; the alleged extraterrestrial woman, recipient of Villas Boas' nocturnal emission, for instance. (Passport to Maginaria, pp 113-116)

The Villas Boas case, which I shall consider first, is remarkable in many ways, not the least of which is the failure of the brothers to investigate the strange light which they allegedly saw in their corral at about 11.00 p.m. on October 5th, 1957. Furthermore Antonio's versions of events given at different interviews did not always tally on important details.

Another odd feature of the case is the reported refusal of the space female to have intercourse a third time with Antonio despite his stated keenness to perform. As her intention was to copulate for the purpose of procreation rather than for mere pleasure this coyness is hard to understand since by it she denied herself the maximum intake of seminal fluid.

Indeed the whole performance is ill-suited to the purpose in hand. It would have been eminently more sensible for these superior entities to have secured a specimen of Boas' abundant semen for subsequent artificial insemination. In agriculture such a practice is preferred because by its means a good bull can be made to sire vastly more offspring than by normal copulation, though the method is more difficult in the case of human beings. In point of fact such stories of fruitful sexual intercourse between human beings and extra- or ultra-terrestrials are biological nonsense.

Yarns of women being impregnated by elementals, spacemen or a deity, for instance, are just not to be taken seriously.

If human females become pregnant it is through fertilisation by human sperm and not by cohabiting with non-human males. If some artificial equivalent to sperm were ever to be discovered sexual intercourse would no longer be necessary—perish the thought!

To my mind the reported "entities" in such yarns are as real and the goings on as credible as those encountered in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." That persons with any nous should bother us with such pathetic nonsense in this day and age is an unflattering reflection on their anticipated audience.

A typical example of a contact episode without intimate personal intercourse of any kind is mentioned on page 75 of Operation Trojan Horse. It concerns an allegedly mysterious UFO type landing which occurred near Alencon, France, at 5.a.m. on June 12, 1790. The witnesses, a group of French peasants, described how "an enormous globe had appeared that morning, moving with a rocking motion, and that it crashed into the top of a hill, uprooting the vegetation." What the vegetation was or how much was uprooted is not disclosed in the account, which continues: "Heat from the object started grass fires and the peasants rushed to put them out before they spread. The huge globe was warm to the touch."

"As the crowd gathered round the mysterious object, a sort of door opened, and there came out a person just like us, but dressed in a strange manner, in clothes adhering completely to the body, and seeing this crowd of people, this person murmured something incomprehensible and ran into the wood." (my italics)

A few moments later the object "exploded silently and nothing was left but a fine powder."

What a lot of "hot air" about a crashed balloon and its unfortunate pilot! An intrepid balloonist, bathed in perspiration through close proximity to his brazier, might well have taken to his heels on being confronted with a gang of

peasants. And one could hazard a guess at the "incomprehensible" words which he "muttered"!

To round off this section I shall discuss a type of entity with which no personal contact is possible and mentioned by Keel on page 73 of Operation Trojan Horse. Concerning the Book of Revelation he writes: "In chapter 10, John declares, 'and I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was on his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.'" (my italics)

This is, I propose, a description of a bright bolide accompanied by fragmentation effects and is interesting for its use of the word "angel." It seems that this term is open to several interpretations and that Keel (*ibid*, p 72) is not quite correct when he says: "Indeed the angels seem to have been manlike, though gifted with extraordinary powers." Some were and some weren't, depending on the circumstances, apparently, though the famous Kaaba Stone worshipped at Mecca by the followers of the Prophet is probably a large meteorite.

Portrait of a New Ufologist

At this juncture I feel that is relevant to study some of the personal information divulged by author, contactee, amateur magician and new ufologist John Keel in order to gain some idea of the sort of person with whom we are dealing, as this has a bearing on the seriousness with which his pronouncements must be taken. So far I have formed a very poor impression indeed.

On page 272 of Operation Trojan Horse Keel says: "Within a year after I had launched my full-time UFO investigating effort in 1966, the phenomenon had zeroed in on me just as it had done with the British newspaper editor Arthur Shuttlewood and so many others."

Not a very promising beginning. "My telephone ran amok first, with mysterious strangers calling day and night to deliver mysterious messages 'from the space people!'"

Someone, I suggest, was up to a bit of hanky-panky at Keel's expense.

"Then I was catapulted into the dreamlike fantasy world of demonology. I kept rendezvous with black cadillacs on Long Island, and when I tried to pursue them, they would disappear impossibly on dead end roads.... Luminous aerial objects seemed to follow me around like faithful dogs....and some of my closest friends in New York....began to report strange experiences of their own--poltergeists erupted in their apartments, ugly smells of hydrogen sulphide haunted them." (No comment. — A.W.S.)

"One girl of my acquaintance suffered an inexplicable two-hour mental blackout while she was sitting under a hair dryer alone in her apartment." (She went to sleep. — A.W.S.)

On page 274 the commentary continues: "Through these silent contactees (people whose stories have never been published) I actually entered into communication with the entities themselves. When a UFO would visit a contactee, he or she would call me immediately and I would actually converse with the entity by telephone, sometimes for hours."

Keel's silence about the subject-matter of these long-winded conversations is highly intriguing. He claims to have kept "notes, tapes and other material" so why is he so reticent?

"I developed an elaborate system of checks and balances to preclude hoaxes. Unrelated people in several states became part of my secret network to that mysterious 'other world.' I wasted months playing the mischievous games of the elementals, searching for nonexistent UFO bases, trying to find ways to protect witnesses from the 'men in black.' Poltergeist manifestations seemed to break out wherever I went."

If I said what I am thinking it might be libellous, so I shall hold my peace and leave the reader to judge for himself. Suffice to say that if I were religiously inclined I should appeal fervently to the Deity at this point, but worse is to follow:

Keel writes, apropos June 1967: "Throughout that month the contactees were warned that an even bigger power failure was due. It would be nationwide in scope and would last for three days, the entities promised, and would be followed by natural catastrophes in July. New York city was scheduled to slide into the ocean on July 2." (my italics)

Predictably New York city failed to deposit itself into the Atlantic, but nevertheless our nervous new ufologist later packed up his equipment, "rented a car, and drove out to the flap area near Melville, Long Island, to await the assassination (of the Pope, also predicted) and the blackout."

There was no blackout, the Pope was not quite assassinated and poor Mr

Keel eventually returned home accompanied by an unused contingency sample of drinking water which he had purchased on his outward journey. The UFO contactees, trance mediums and automatic writers in touch with the spirit world had led our author sadly astray. I must confess that after reading Operation Trojan Horse no antics which Keel might get up to would surprise me. For example, when he remarks: "I have stood on many a windy hilltop staring in amazement at the multi-coloured objects cavorting about the night skies," highly reminiscent of the Warminster circus which has been mentioned previously.

"More than once I woke up in the middle of the night to find myself unable to move, with a huge dark apparition standing over me," he says. The mind boggles!

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Keel informs us that: "Dabbling with UFOs can be as dangerous as dabbling with black magic. The phenomenon preys upon the neurotic, the gullible and the immature. For a time I questioned my own sanity. (my italics)

He also writes: "The UFO phenomenon can be extremely dangerous, since the objects move through frequency changes which can produce deadly gamma and ultra-violet rays." (Operation Trojan Horse, p 305) He might have added "unknown to science," for, to the best of my knowledge, "moving through frequency changes" (whatever that means) does not result in the production of gamma rays, ultra-violet emission or anything else. Just a modicum of pseudo-science to keep the pot boiling, apparently.

Another snippet of the same ilk appears on page 291 where Keel generously informs us: "The flying saucers do not come from some Buck Rogers-type civilisation on some distant planet. They are our next door neighbours, part of another space-time continuum where life, matter and energy are radically different from ours!!" Yet he repeatedly tells his readers that alleged examples of such "radically different" life and matter are able to have potent sexual relations with human beings.

One becomes a little weary of this "other space-time continuum" which is so overworked in ufological literature, usually as a convenient vehicle for the propagation of some potty idea or other which an author may wish to advance. But then Keel apparently believes in "illusion-prone spirits (who) are responsible for nearly all of the UFO appearances and manipulations," which seems like a lot of nonsense to me.

These "spirits," I gather, are the "ultraterrestrials" which figure so prominently in his text and include, presumably, demons, fairies, incubi, succubae and other unsavoury alleged entities more appropriate to a less enlightened age than our own.

Keel is strong on imagination but weak on science, for he claims, (*ibid*, p 215): "Demonology is not just another crackpot-ology," (like archaeology and geology, for example?), and later: "That point is that the earth was occupied before man arrived or was created." (Not "evolved" of course. That would never do.) "The original occupants or forces were parapsychical and possessed the power of transmogrification," he asserts.

Parapsychical dinosaurs, no doubt, living in parapsychical forests, now turned into parapsychical, transmogrified coal. Give me strength!

I shall endeavour to deal with the "parapsychical hypothesis" in the next section, but lest it be thought that I have been unjust to John Keel in selecting the particular items of his activities which I have quoted above I must mention the apparent awe with which he recounts information allegedly received from the so-called "spirit world" and other equally dubious sources.

As an amateur magician he must surely be aware that seances and the like are a hoaxer's paradise. Certainly any illusionist who is well versed in the tricks of the trade can deceive the vast majority of his audience unless it is composed of fellow members of the Magic Circle. The addition of verbal "sleight of hand" to mere manual dexterity only adds an extra confusing factor to the situation. Predictions of forthcoming events are no more than intelligent guesswork, if that, and are couched usually in suitably vague terms.

This must be so for otherwise steps would be taken to avert many imminent specific calamities, in which case the calamities would not occur and the predictions would be rendered false.

The messages of "mediums", contactees and believers in the supernatural in general are on a par with the predictions of astrologers. Keel himself professes to have had prior warning from "a UFO entity" and other sources of all sorts of impending disasters including, by implication, the collapse of the Point Pleasant bridge over the river Ohio, but it is noteworthy that the bridge was not specifically mentioned in the warnings and that no date was given for the disaster.

In point of fact the Ohio-Mississippi-Missouri river system is notorious for natural disasters, mostly by flooding, and so a vague intimation of unpleasant aqueous events sometime in the future signified very little. Actually the Ohio prediction reads much more like a flood warning than information about a bridge collapse.

One might as well predict monsoon flooding in India or accidents in the construction of the new Jersey Tunnel.

According to Keel the "entities" are omniscient. They are supposedly able to speak all the languages of the world and know the life histories of every human being. One would think, therefore, that they could provide rather more specific information than the vague waffle which he presents as the impressive fruits of allegedly frequent and protracted conversations with the said entities. Quite frankly, I find the whole rigmarole thoroughly unconvincing and rather pathetic.

The "Paraphysical Hypothesis"

According to John Keel (Operation Trojan Horse, p 43) the "paraphysical hypothesis" is the central theme of the book and can best be summarised by some remarks of Air Marshal Sir Victor Goddard (*ibid*, p 44), according to whom some UFO operators are the paraphysical denizens of a planet other than Earth or of a paraphysical invisible world coincident with "our physical Earth planet". Apparently he visualises an invisible replica of the Earth occupying the same place in the solar system as the real Earth.

Presumably this alleged quasi-planet has exactly the same shape as the real one, the same "rocks", "seas", "mountains", "houses", "trees", "roads", and "animals", including some four thousand million invisible replica human beings! What a mighty construction of the imagination—and what a mighty load of nonsense!

Am I being too sceptical and hyper-critical? I think not, for Keel obligingly tells his readers (*ibid*, p 46): "The real UFO story is a story....of an invisible world....of illusion and hallucination where the unreal seems very real.." Illusion, hallucination and unreality; the hallmarks of the paraphysical hypothesis—and by its leading proponent, not by me.

In Vallee's words, mystical and escaping rational analysis. Similar in a great many ways to the supernatural aspects of religion with which the new ufologists frequently compare it. Vallee even goes so far as to equate the "ultraterrestrial", paraphysical abode of the UFO entities, "Magonia", with heaven, hell and fairyland; and indeed this identification becomes perfectly acceptable on the realisation that all these mystical places and a good many more of the same fraternity are mere constructions of the imagination designed to circumvent the necessity for rational analysis and interpretation of natural phenomena and illusory experiences. Designed also—and here is its most ~~xxix~~ sinister aspect—to remove the matters under discussion from the arena of normal debate and to substitute "faith" for understanding and credulity ~~xx~~ for criticism.

It is noticeable that the new ufology, like religion, is antipathetic to science and this is understandable, for the mere existence of science compels the new ufology to become nebulous to the point of self-extinction. Its "evidence" is so confused and its tenets couched in such vague terms as to render the task of assessment extremely difficult, though not, with persistence, completely impossible. My conclusion is not a favourable one.

Summary and conclusions

In the preceding pages I have endeavoured to examine a representative sample of the cases which have been put forward by Messrs. Keel and Vallee to support their contention that the explanation for UFO sightings lies in phenomena which are in some way outside nature and which therefore cannot be fitted into the general framework of systematised knowledge.

I consider that the onus of proof lies with the "new ufologists" and that they have failed utterly to supply such proof. I have shown that ~~xx~~ their accounts are so unreliable and their reasoning so faulty that the conclusions ~~xx~~ which they reach are quite untenable and must be dismissed as unreasonable, illogical and absurd.

Vallee has unfortunately shown a falling away in his Passport to Magonia from the standards which he has previously observed, ~~xx~~ e.g. in Anatomy of a Phenomenon, and is not excused by an introductory statement to the effect that the book is not a scientific one. This becomes all too apparent on even a casual perusal and it quickly transpires that the reader is in for what is little better than a veritable torrent of unbridled speculation and wild theorising based on the flimsiest of evidence. It is therefore not surprising that Gordon Creighton predicts that the book will become a classic in ufological literature. No doubt Operation

Trojan Horse, too, is destined to become a "classic".

There is, however, one matter where some measure of agreement with the new ufologists is possible and this concerns the suggestion by John Keel that certain types of modern UFO events have their counterparts in peculiar happenings of other times than our own. But whereas Keel concludes that this is because mysterious "ultraterrestrials" were in these cases somehow involved my opinion is simply that similar misidentifications of similar natural phenomena have occurred in the past as in the present and that people have had similar dreams and hallucinations throughout recorded history.

Interpretations have varied depending on the state of knowledge pertaining at the time but the phenomena bear a similar stamp at all times. This applies to alleged miraculous visions on the one hand and to misidentifications of comets, planets, bolides and meteorological phenomena on the other. Our remote ancestors, of course, had no artificial satellites, aircraft, or car headlights to misidentify.

I do not follow Keel and Vallee into the hypothetical domain of spirits. They are superfluous and irrelevant and belief in them is a hindrance to understanding. In my opinion the authors' conclusion that UFO phenomena are the work of ephemeral, quasi-human beings is incorrect and not substantiated. Other, less bizarre, postulates fit the circumstances better and are therefore to be preferred.

Invocation of the supernatural to explain awkward observations is the antithesis of that rational advancement of knowledge which has been so signal an achievement of mankind since the Reformation, and the appeal of the new ufologists is essentially for a return to the dark ages when mankind laboured under the most abysmal burden of superstitious and irrational belief.

The solution to the outstanding problems of ufology, such as they are, does not lie with the alleged ultraterrestrials—who are literally "beyond the earth", or with the motley collection of deities and spirits which man has inflicted upon himself throughout the ages. Sorcery and religion have failed to provide viable explanations of natural events including the origin of Homo sapiens and have never been successful as a means of influencing man's environment. No amount of prayers or incantations can deflect the lavas of Vesuvius, control the floodwaters of the Nile, or prevent a plague of locusts. Such "methods" are anachronisms in the modern world and their retention, by distracting attention from more sensible ideas, is the ~~mixx~~ direct cause of much foolish behaviour and much wasteful speculation at a time when man, by his own efforts, has succeeded in reaching the surface of the Moon.

The new ufology is an undesirable throwback to outworn and discredited concepts which should not detain the serious ufologist.

Glossary of some important terms

Bolide Bright light produced when a sizeable meteoroid passes through the earth's atmosphere, often accompanied by thunderous sounds.

Demon A spirit. Some demons good and some bad, depending on abode. A supernatural being. An evil spirit or genius, usually. An inferior deity.

Demonology A treatise on, or the study of, evil spirits.

Evolution (Biol.) Origination of species from pre-existing forms, not by special creation.

Evolve (Geol. & Biol.) Develop by natural process.

Fairy Imaginary being or spirit of diminutive size. Small supernatural being with magical powers.

Fairyland The imaginary land or abode of the fairies.

Fairy Ring Circular band of darker grass caused by fungi and attributed to fairy dancing.

Faith (Theol.) Apprehension of divine truth apart from proof.

Hallucination Apparent perception of an external object not actually present.

Illusion.

Illusion Sensuous perception of an external object involving false belief.

Illusionist A conjuror. Person who produces apparently inexplicable effects by natural means.

Incubus Evil spirit supposed to descend on sleeping persons. Nightmare. Person or thing that oppresses like nightmare. The male equivalent of succubus.

Meteor The light phenomena produced when a small meteoroid passes through the earth's atmosphere.

Meteorite Piece of extraterrestrial matter which has survived passage through the earth's atmosphere.

Meteoroid Piece of solid extraterrestrial matter in space, grading upwards into

larger bodies known as asteroids.

Palaeontology The science of extinct organisms or fossil remains.

Para- Greek prefix meaning beyond or beside.

Paraphysical Beyond physical reality or the laws of physics.

Religion Belief in a superhuman, all powerful, supernatural being or divinity.

System of faith and worship (of a divinity). Pertaining to the above.

Science Systematised and formulated knowledge dealing especially with material phenomena and based mainly on observation and experiment. The pursuit of knowledge by observation and experiment as distinct from intuition, pure reason or divine revelation.

Spirit A supernatural or spiritual being.

Spiritual Not material. Consisting of the nature of spirit.

Succubus Female demon having sexual intercourse with sleeping man.

Super- Latin prefix meaning over or beyond.

Supernatural Being above the forces of nature. Beyond the power or laws of nature.

Transmogrify (Jocular or colloq.) Transform, especially in magical or surprising manner. Hence transmogrification. (Possibly a corruption of transmigration; passing from one body or place to another.)

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